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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: IRAQI GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS BLAME PRIME MINISTER'S
OFFICE FOR CANCELLATION OF THE THIRD NATIONAL
RECONCILIATION CONFERENCE

REF: BAGHDAD 3391

Classified By: Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (S) SUMMARY: In separate meetings on October 16 with President Talabani and Deputy Prime Minister Barham Salih, both assured the Ambassador that the third National Reconciliation Conference for Political Party leaders was "indefinitely postponed," rather than cancelled outright. Both Talabani and Salih promised to look into the issue and ensure funding for the conference to take place. According to Salih, Minister of State for National Reconciliation Akram al-Hakim accused the Prime Minister's office (PMO) of not taking national reconciliation seriously. Salih himself complained that the PMO is incompetent, incapable of organizing itself or running the government efficiently. President Talabani confirmed Salih's remarks about the PMO, stating that all the ministers were coming to him to complain. None of the ministries have adequate staffs, budgets, or oversight authority, he reported, and the ministers - particularly the Ministers of State without portfolios - believe that their needs are being ignored by the PMO. In a meeting on October 15, Presidency Council Chief of Staff Kamran Karadaghi told PolOff that many Iraqi political leaders believed that there was an internal "committee" within the PMO, composed of longtime Maliki insiders, who made decisions for Maliki. END SUMMARY.

National Reconciliation Conference a Casualty of the PMO

¶2. (S) In separate meetings on October 16 with President Talabani and Deputy Prime Minister Barham Salih, the Ambassador inquired about the recent cancellation of the third National Reconciliation Conference for Political Party leaders. Salih claimed that the conference had only been "indefinitely postponed," rather than cancelled outright. He gave the Ambassador a brief background of the conference: originally, it had been slated to take place in Erbil, but the recent controversy over the flag issue forced the conference to be moved back to Baghdad (see reftel). According to Salih, the Minister of State for National Reconciliation Akram al-Hakim accused the Prime Minister's office (PMO) of not taking national reconciliation seriously. Salih himself complained that the PMO is incompetent, incapable of organizing itself or running the government efficiently. He promised to consult with the CoR leadership and the PMO to arrange for the funding for the conference.

¶3. (S) President Talabani confirmed Salih's remarks about the PMO, stating that all the ministers were coming to him

to complain. None of the ministries have adequate staffs, budgets, or oversight authority, he reported, and the ministers - particularly the Ministers of State without portfolios - believe that their needs are being ignored by the PMO. On top of this, Talabani stated, the ministers feel they are being unfairly chastised for failing to meet standards without being given the tools to do their jobs. Talabani added that a group of senior Iraqi officials, himself included, spent a recent evening complaining about the poor state of the government, but vowed to speak to Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki to resolve the situation.

Rumors of Internal Power Struggle in the PMO

14. (S) In a meeting on October 15, Presidency Council Chief of Staff Kamran Karadaghi told PolOff that many Iraqi political leaders believed that there was an internal "committee" within the PMO, composed of longtime Maliki insiders, who made decisions for Maliki. This was nothing new, he stressed - there had been a similar situation under former Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Ja'afari - but the concern in Iraqi government circles was the uncertainty over who exactly was in this "mini cabinet." Karadaghi reported that many ministers felt that Maliki's advisors were keeping information from him, and making many decisions at the lower levels on their own.
KHALILZAD